

SENSUOUS IMAGES IN THE POETRY OF MAHA NAND SHARMA

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the use of sensuousness in Maha Nand Sharma's poetical works. Like John Keats, Dr. Sharma has used all five senses as visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile and gustatory. Moreover, the four elements of a poetic image like analogy, sensory perception, emotion and intellection have been dealt with quotes in his works.

KEYWORDS: *Sensuousness, Analogy, Intellection, Olfactory, Tactile, Gustatory and Predominantly*

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INTRODUCTION

In the galaxy of Indian writing in English, Maha Nand Sharma is considered as one of the brightest stars. He has authored nine works. Out of these nine works, the poetic works are eight in number and one is a work of criticism – Wodehouse the Fictionist. Among his works of poetry are three epics – *Flowering of a Lotus* consisting of hundred eighty seven Spenserian stanzas. *A Rudraksha Rosary* and *A Spiritual Warrior*, each running into more than four thousand lines of blank verse. His works also include five collections of Poems– *The Pageant of Seasons, Flowers and Buds, Scattered Leaves, Divine Glimpses and Gushing Streams*.

Maha Nand Sharma's poetry has been praised very much for the richness of imagery in his every poetical work. Before expressing the views in relation to his use of imagery, it is necessary to define an image as well as imagery. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "imagery is a use of figurative language to produce pictures in the mind of readers or hearers."¹ According to C. Day Lewis, an image "is a picture made out of words", and "a poem may itself be an image composed from a multiplicity of images."² The poetic image is constituted of four elements – analogy, sensory perception, emotion and intellection, in their varying degrees. Before illustrating the presence of all the elements in an image, a separate explanation of each element in the imagery is necessary to illustrate each element specifically and also to indicate the predominance of a particular element over some others.

Of the four components of an image, the first one, analogy, involves the comparison of the idea or theme presented, to another idea or theme to make the former vivid. It is found in the figures of comparison such as simile and metaphor and even personification which, though a figure of imagination, implicitly involves comparison also. Of the first two figures, Gokak says, "similes and metaphors are the main source of imagery in poetry."³ Middleton Murry observes: "All metaphors and similes can be described as the analogy by which the human mind explores the universe of quality and charts the non-measurable world."⁴ R.S. Verma says: "It is obvious that metaphorical language, which describes the abstract in terms of the familiar, should possess a high degree of sensuous vividness."⁵ In *A Spiritual Warrior*, one comes across such a comparison in which the abstract idea of the stability of the spiritually enlightened heart or feelings of Gangay amidst the divergently pulling base sensual passions is illustrated with the visible concrete phenomenon of the flames of an earthen lamp, untrembling in the midst of

winds, felt by the tactile sense:

"And lo! as strangely' nough,
The flame of bowl-like earthen lamp may burn
Incessantly untrembling 'midst the winds,
The spiritual flame of Gangey's soul now burned
Continuously untrembling 'midst the winds
Of Gangey's passions base...."⁶

The image in the quotation above becomes more pleasing to the reader's imagination which has to be exercised in visualising an impossible situation- the situation of the flame not trembling in the midst of winds. The image thus aptly illustrates the extreme difficulty of keeping the heart stable in the midst of base passions, pulling in different directions.

Kalika Ranjan Chatterjee finds "romantic, sensuous imagery"⁷ in Sharma's poetry. The poet often expresses an idea perceptible to one sense, in terms of the other in order to make the idea vivid. In the following lines, he expresses in terms of tactile and gustatory senses, the idea of words' which, when spoken, are perceptible to aural sense and when written, are perceptible to visual sense:

"As soothing as the breeze of March, as sweet
As honey were the well meant words of gods."⁸

At times, the abstract ideas such as 'falsehood' and 'truth' are made vivid by the poet by their comparison to objects such as clouds and sun perceptible to visual sense:

"The pitch-black clouds
Of falsehood break at last and Truth's unveiled
In all its radiance like the undimmed Sun."⁹

The aptness of sensuous images in Sharma's poetry arrests the reader's attention. He finds in the growth of the crescent into full moon a suitable visual image for the development of the baby Markandeya into a child:

"As crescent develops day by day to form
The moon in all its fullness, so the babe
Was growing day by day into a child."¹⁰

Three ideas related to the baby Markandeya are conveyed by this image – the idea of the growth of child in size, the idea of the beauty of the child by his comparison to the moon and the idea of the movement of time involved in the growth.

In Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", the image of flowers with their colours, odours and the taste of their honey etc. appeal to all four, five senses of the readers or hearers:

"I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet,
Wherewith the seasonable month endows.
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."¹¹

In the same way, Sharma's description of women – the first about the forest girls and the second about Pingla – appeal to all five senses, visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile and gustatory as well:

"Behind the Pandits sat the forest-maids.
The yellow fragrant flow'rs in tresses tucked;
Like Koel's thrilling notes, their voices sweet;
Their bodies tall and slim in bloom of health;
Their yellow saris worn o'er them with grace;
Their faces bright-complexioned, smooth and round;
Their cheeks, like rose's petals, slippery soft,"¹²
And again,
"The lips so red which raised in all, forsooth,
A sigh for squeezing out their juice with a kiss uncouth."¹³

Of emotion or passion in the images, Coleridge says, "They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a pre-dominant passion...."¹⁴ The intellectual element is also present in every image in more or less degree. The creation of an image is based upon the perception of the dissimilar in the similar and vice versa in two ideas or objects. Stanley C. Glassey remarks, "The use of imagery really turns on the perception of likeness in difference and difference in likeness".¹⁵ However, the degree of intellectuality increases if the image is unconventional and novel enough to need greater application of mind. V.K. Gokak calls such an image, the "image of thought".¹⁶ According to him, "the image of thought is said to be modernist."¹⁷

In using images predominantly sensuous, the poet, at times, expresses concrete ideas perceptible to one sense, in terms of the other. The aptness and the comprehensive expressiveness of the image in his poetry arrest attention. The poet uses all sensuous images with telling effect.

Thus, it is clear that sensuousness is the dominant quality of his images. The pieces of sensuous images keep the readers spell-bound with their appeal to different senses on the plane of imagination. Professor Robert A. Hall (Jr.) writes, "His imagery is as luxuriant as the natural vegetation of India itself...."¹⁸

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